

# The IDVA Update



Mitch Daniels - Governor  
Tom Applegate - Director

Fall 2008

The Indiana Department of Veterans Affairs Newsletter

Fall Edition

## Aviation Soldiers Return Home Safely

Story by Staff Sgt. Jeff Lowry

Indiana National Guard Soldiers with 2nd Battalion, 238th General Support Aviation, flew medical evacuation missions over Iraq for nearly a year. Now that they're back in the U.S.A., their emotions are flying higher.

"I'm flying higher now that I'm home," said Capt. Timothy D. Stoner, the unit's commander. "It's wonderful to be back home."

The members of the 2-238th returned Tuesday to the 38th Division armory amid tears, cheers, U.S. flags waving, and patriotic songs.

During the unit's deployment, it supported medical evacuation missions from three different operating bases in Iraq. Aviators flew more than 4,000 hours, of which nearly 3,200 represented combat situations in 1,261 missions. The unit carried 1,064 passengers. The soldiers did this while maintaining a 90 percent readiness rate.

"It was good we were there," said Sgt. Moriah Addington, an administration sergeant with the unit. "We're medevac (medical evacuation). You see everyday why we're there."

The commander and a pilot agreed that saving a service-member's life carries great rewards.

"It was a great mission," said Stoner. "It's the best mission - saving Soldiers' lives. Our guys did an incredible, incredible job."

"It was a good stay," said Chief Warrant Office Brett Oldfather, a pilot with the unit. "Our flight medics did well. It was flawless."

The Shelbyville-headquartered unit mobilized a year ago, May 5, 2007. The Soldiers of the 2-238th include medi-

cal evacuation specialists, aviators flying UH-60 Blackhawks, and the maintenance and technical repair experts who keep the helicopters in top condition in sandy, battlefield environments.



*Indiana Army National Guard Capt. Timothy D. Stoner, a company commander with 2nd Battalion, 238th General Support Aviation, listens to his son Gage, left, as he holds his daughter Campbell, center, and another son Briggs. Soldiers with the 2-238th returned home to Indiana Tuesday April 29, 2008.*



*Sergeant 1st Class Chaz Farkass, 2nd Battalion 238th General Support Aviation, is welcomed home by his daughters Silvia and Naomi after a year in Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom at the 38th Infantry Division Armory, Indianapolis, April 29. Photo by Spc. William E. Henry, Indiana National Guard*

*Captain Timothy Stoner, commander of the 2nd Battalion 238th General Support Aviation, embraces his son Briggs after a year in Iraq supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom at the 38th Infantry Division Armory, Indianapolis, April 29.*



## Huntington County Vietnam Veteran Receives Delayed High School Diploma

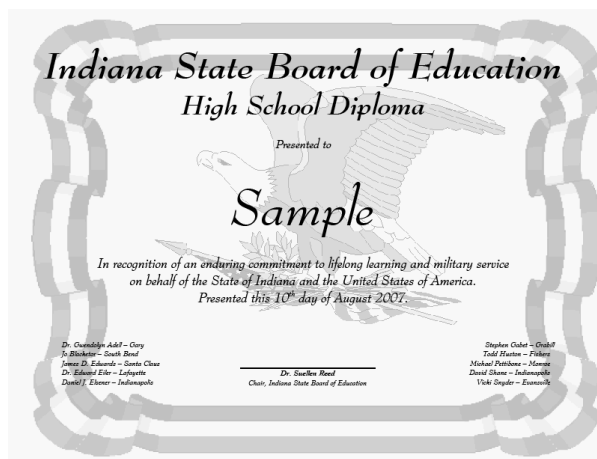


*Pictured from left are IDVA Director, Tom Applegate; Huntington County VSO, Bruce Stanton; Vietnam veteran Charles "Chuck" Kuschel and Huntington County Community Schools Superintendent, Tracey Shafer.*

A Delayed High School Diploma was presented to Mr. Kuschel on May 12, 2008 at the regular meeting of the Huntington County School Board.

Mr. Kuschel served in Vietnam where he was awarded the Purple Heart for wounds received while serving as a Combat Engineer with Company A-26 Engineer Battalion, Americal Division, on June 26, 1968 near Checkpoint Echo in Vietnam when a booby trap exploded.

His other awards include Vietnam Service Medal, the Vietnam Campaign Medal with 60 device, and the National Defense Service Medal.



## Lt. Governor Becky Skillman Honored with the Patriot Award



*Lt. Governor Becky Skillman accepts the Patriot Award from the Indiana Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), an agency of the Department of Defense. W. Douglas Gibbens Executive Director ESGR, Roger Peterman, State Chair ESGR, and General Martin Umbarger, National Guard, presented the award.*

Surprise showed on her face, as my boss, Lt. Governor Becky Skillman accepted the Patriot Award from the Indiana Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) last week. The award came as a complete surprise to the Lt. Governor. W. Douglas Gibbens Executive Director ESGR, Roger Peterman, State Chair ESGR, and General Martin Umbarger, National Guard, awarded it to her in her office.

She has gone above and beyond to support her staff that serve or have a loved one in the military. We have an Army wife, a Navy officer and an Air Guard Reservist on staff in our office. And she supports them in every way possible.

I am proud to work for Lt. Governor Skillman, and proud of her deep respect and admiration for our servicemen and women. Please join me in congratulating all employers who have been awarded the Patriot Award, including the Lt. Governor.

Sincerely,  
Chris Crabtree,  
Chief of Staff

## Welcome New IDVA Staff

Since our last IDVA update, four new employees have been added to our staff. John Newsom, Deputy Director; Julia Holloway, Director of Health Care Services, Indiana Veterans Home; our new receptionist Stephanie DeBow; and our new SAA Program Director Summer Tacy.

### Meet John Newsom



John Newsom comes to IDVA from FSSA where he served as a program director for the Blind and Visually Impaired program, he has also been with the State Board of Health and Juvenile Probation Officer at the Wood Youth Center in Ft. Wayne, Indiana.

John was in the US Army from 1965-1967 where he served as an x-ray technician at the Military Entrance Processing Station, San Francisco, California. After the Army John returned to Oklahoma where he received his MBA from the University of Oklahoma/Central State.

John's hobbies include Field Trailing, raising English Setter Bird Dogs and General Aviation.

### Meet Julia Holloway



Please welcome Julia Holloway, who was recently appointed Director of Health Care Services, a new position within IDVA. Julia serves as a liaison between the Indiana Veterans Home and the director of IDVA. In that role her principle responsibility is overseeing and coordinating organizational support to the Indiana Veterans Home.

Before coming to the Department of Veterans Affairs, Julia worked as deputy director of Division of Aging. In that role Holloway coordinated the administrative functions of the Division within the State of Indiana's Family and Social Services Administration. Her position also included work with ADRCs/AAAs, as well as nursing home transition and diversion initiatives.

When first coming to work for the State, Julia worked in Lt. Governor Becky Skillman's Business Office. She has also worked as an independent grant writer, evaluator and program development and planning consultant. Her career has also included positions as Director of Rural Health Initiatives for a Community Action Agency, Development Director at a Domestic Violence Agency, and Deputy Clerk-Treasurer for a small town in southern Indiana.

### Meet Stephanie DeBow



Stephanie DeBow comes to IDVA from the Department of Workforce Development, where she worked as an Intermittent Deputy 5. She is married to a Vietnam veteran. Currently her oldest daughter, Gabriela, is in the US Army at Fort Jackson South Carolina.

Stephanie will be serving as the IDVA receptionist.

### Meet Summer Tacy



Summer Tacy is new to state employment, coming to IDVA from the private sector where she was employed as a Special Education teacher with Franklin Township schools.

Summer entered the service at age 19 and began her Air Force time in the law enforcement career field. While in the USAF Summer served at Anderson AFB, Guam and Vance AFB, Enid, Oklahoma.

The SAA serves several thousand veterans annually who receive education benefits from the VA. Summer will not only work with colleges and vocational education but also apprenticeship and on-the-job training programs.

## Welcome John, Julia, Stephanie and Summer!!



## Deputy Director Jim Holdeman Retires

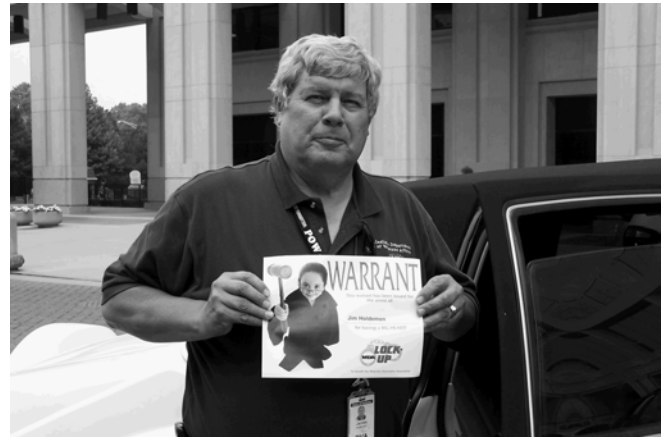


After more than 20 years of faithful service to the State of Indiana, deputy Director Jim Holdeman has decided that he would like to concentrate more on his golf game.

Jim began his career with the State of Indiana as a correctional officer at the Indiana Youth Center in Plainfield in August of 1987. A year later he was promoted to the Network Administrator for DOC's central office local area network which consisted of one file server and five computers. It was his job to convince those five secretaries that this new technology was the greatest thing since sliced bread. He must have done something right because the following year he was promoted to the position of Supervisor of Offender Records, a position he held for the next fifteen years. In that position he traveled the state and audited the offender records at all of DOC's adult and juvenile facilities.

In October of 2002 he was hired as Deputy Director of the Indiana Dept. of Veterans' Affairs a position he has held ever since. Along with his normal fiscal duties and overseeing the operation of the Indiana Veterans Memorial Cemetery, Jim has served as the IDVA representative on the Indiana Interagency Council on the Homeless, HVAF of Indiana stand down committee, DOC Transition from Prison to Community Initiative, and a member of the Continuum of Care Advisory Board for the City of Indianapolis.

Upon retiring Jim is looking forward to becoming the full time caregiver for his young son along with reducing his handicap in golf to a low double digit. Jim's wife, Jennifer, also has some as of yet undisclosed plans for his retirement.



## Goodbye Jim, You Will Be Missed!!

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## IDVA Grants First Purple Heart Recipient Remission of Fees



*IDVA Director Tom Applegate presents Joseph Cotterman with*

August was a historic month for IDVA, it saw the granting of its first Remission of Fees to a Purple Heart Recipient under a new law that took effect July 1, 2008. Joseph Cotterman, a veteran of OIF/OEF was the first veteran to be granted Remission of Fees under the new law. The new law reads that any service member who enters active duty service from a permanent home address in Indiana after September 10, 2001, has an Honorable Discharge and is awarded the Purple Heart is eligible to attend any state school in Indiana under the Remission of Fees program.

# State Approving Agency

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## The New GI Bill

I'm sure many of you have heard about the vast changes to education benefits for our veterans. In this IDVA update, in order to provide the most accurate information, we have taken it directly from federal VA representatives and the GI Bill web site. Please see the [www.gibill.va.gov](http://www.gibill.va.gov) for the latest information as the federal VA continues its efforts to work out final details of implementation. Here are just some of the facts.

On June 30, 2008 President George W. Bush signed into law the "Post-9/11 Veterans Education Assistance Act of 2008," a new education benefit program that will expand the benefits available to certain service members and veterans with active duty military service on or after September 11, 2001. The federal VA Education Service is currently working to implement this new program, which will begin paying benefits for schooling enrolled in after 7/31/2009. Consequently, a number of changes may occur in regard to current Education Service procedures. General information about the new benefit program is included in this article, and additional information can be found at [www.gibill.va.gov](http://www.gibill.va.gov).

The Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits are payable on **August 1, 2009** towards schooling enrolled in after 7/31/2009. An individual must have a minimum of 90 days active duty after September 10, 2001, and

- Honorably discharged from Armed Forces, or
- Released from Armed Forces with service characterized as honorable and placed on the retired list, temporary disability retired list, or transferred to the Fleet Reserve or the Fleet Marine Corps Reserve; or
- Released from the Armed Forces with service characterized as honorable for further service in a reserve component; or
- Discharged or released from the Armed Forces for:
  - EPTS (Existed Prior to Service)
  - HDSP (Hardship) or

- CIWD (Condition Interfered with Duty); or
- Continue to be on active duty.

An individual may elect to receive benefits under the Post-9/11 GI Bill if, on **August 1, 2009**, the individual is eligible for chapter 30, 1606, 1607, or is serving in the Armed Forces. Generally the number of months of entitlement you can receive is 36 months. A person could earn 36 months of entitlement after serving the minimum 90 days. Eligible individuals will receive a percentage, as determined by length of credible active duty service, of the following:

- Amount of tuition and fees not to exceed the most expensive in-State public institution of higher education;
- Monthly housing allowance equal to the basic allowance for housing (BAH) amount payable to E-5 with dependents, in same zip code as school \*; and
- Yearly books and supplies stipend of up to \$1000\*; and
- A one-time payment of \$500 may be payable to certain individuals relocating from highly rural areas.

**NOTE** –Housing Allowance and books and supplies stipend is not payable to individuals on active duty, or for those training at less than half time.

Individuals must serve an aggregate period of active duty after September 10, 2001, of:

### Example for entire school year:

Tuition and Fees charged for full time: \$3000

Highest In-State Tuition and Fees: \$4000

Actual Books and Supplies: \$750

**Example 1:** If you served for three years on active duty and separated, and you are going to school full-time, in the above example you would be eligible for \$3000 for tuition and fees, the monthly housing allowance, and \$1000 for books and supplies.

**Example 2:** If you served 12 months in the guard or reserves, and were going to school full-time, you would be eligible for \$1800 (60% of \$3000) for tuition and fees and \$600 (60% of \$1000) for books and supplies stipend.

Member Serves	Maximum Benefit Payable
At least 36 Months	100%
At least 30 continuous days on active duty and must be discharged due to a service-connected disability	90%
At least 24 months, but less than 30 months	80%
At least 18 months but less than 24 months	70%
At least 12 months, but less than 18 months	50%
At least 6 months but less than 12 months	60%
At least 90 days but less than 6 months	40%

Individuals who serve at least 90 consecutive days are eligible for 15 years from their last period of active duty. If service is 30 days or more and you are released for a service connected disability, you will be eligible for 15 years.

Approved training under The Post 9/11 GI Bill includes graduate and undergraduate degrees, vocational/technical training, and foreign training. All training programs must be offered by an institution of higher learning and approved for purposes of Chapter 30. Additionally, tutorial assistance, and licensing and certification test reimbursement are approved under the Post-9/11 GI Bill. **There is some disagreement about eligibility** for on-the-job training, apprenticeship, correspondence, flight and preparatory courses under Post-9/11 GI Bill if you are currently receiving Chapter 30, 1606 or 1607 benefits.

We advise you to keep checking the web site for current information.

You must be approved by the Department of Defense (DOD) for eligibility to transfer entitlement to your spouse and dependent children. Please contact DOD or your military service for more information. Always submit an application for benefits to receive a formal decision.

As Veteran's educational opportunities change, so do the responsibilities of our growing staff. The SAA continues to expand on matters related to proprietary education (privately owned trade or vocational schools & institutions of higher learning). We have restructured our areas of responsibility with the following changes. Representing the Northwestern Region is Summer Tacy; 317-234-5658. Fred Major has Northeast Indiana and can be reached at 317-234-5865. The Southwest is covered by Raymond Baker, 317-232-3917. Steven Poole has the Southeast portion of the State, and he is at 317-232-3916. As for the central region and currently all Flight Schools; myself, Ron Rousch can be reached at 317-232-3914. Finally, Marcia Hines who keeps us all in line is at 317-234-6062.

Until the next time, please extend a warm welcome to our new Program Director of the State Approving Agency; Summer Tacy. She has taken over responsibilities once held by James Melton. He has departed our service for an exciting opportunity within his church. We all miss James, but wish him the very best as he continues to contribute to our community.

Please remember, we have an evolving web site with information and links to numerous sites established exclusively for veterans and service officers. We can be found at [www.in.gov/dva/](http://www.in.gov/dva/). Thank you for your assistance and support of veterans' vocational and educational advancement.

# Attitude is Everything!

Joseph Kinney | July 24, 2008

Thirty-nine years ago I was shot in an ambush while a Marine on a night patrol in Vietnam. I had potentially fatal wounds to my chest and a serious wound to my right leg. To put matters bluntly, I had never been more terrified in my life. Would I die? And if I died, would I go to heaven? I also thought about the buddies I was leaving behind. Somehow, I wanted to believe that they would be better off without me to slow them down.

The next morning I woke up at a hospital in Da Nang. The doctors told me that my days as a fighting Marine were over. Somehow, I felt that I had more to give but wouldn't get the chance.

My history is relevant only because there are huge differences between then and now when it comes to our Wounded Warriors. For the past couple of years I have had the privilege of knowing Col. Jack Cox (USA, ret.) who is a stalwart in the Wounded Warrior Program at Fort Bragg. He has been a great friend and mentor, and has taken the time to introduce me to some of this generation's wounded.

There are at least two important differences between my generation and the young men I have seen at Fort Bragg's Womack Hospital which is near where I live. For openers, the Army acts as if the wounded person is going to remain forever a soldier. That is their basic operating assumption moving forward. Second, the attitude of these kids is amazing. These brave warriors, no matter how badly wounded they are, believe that they will soon be back with their units fighting in Iraq or Afghanistan.

Today, there are 17 Marines who are amputees fighting in Iraq. I am certain that there are as many soldiers doing the same for the Army.

Recently, I received a widely distributed email from Col (Dr.) Brett Wyrick. He was a trauma surgeon at Balad Air Base in Iraq.

He wrote: "If I ever hear (anyone) griping and complaining, I jump into them pretty quickly, now. Most people over here have nothing to gripe about compared to Marines. Marines are different. They have a different outlook on life . . .

"One Marine Private was here for several days because he was a lower priority evacuation patient. He insisted on coming to attention and displaying proper military courtesy every morning when I came through on rounds. He was in a great deal of pain, and it was a stressful to watch him work his way off the bed and onto his crutches. I told him he was excused and did not have to come to attention while he was a patient, and he informed me he was a good Marine and would address ' . . . Air Force colonels standing on my feet, sir.' I had to turn away so he would not see the tear in my eye. He did not have 'feet' because we amputated his right leg below the knee on the first night he came in.

"I asked a Marine Lance Corporal if there was anything I could get him as I was making rounds one morning. He was an above the knee amputation after an IED blast, and he surprised me when he asked for a trigonometry book. 'You enjoy math do you?' He replied, 'Not particularly, sir. I was never good at it, but I need to get good at it, now.' 'Are you planning on going back to school?' I asked. 'No sir, I am planning on shooting artillery. I will slow an infantry platoon down with just one good leg, but I am going to get good at math and learn how to shoot artillery.' I hope he does.

"I had the sad duty of standing over a young Marine sergeant when he recovered from anesthesia—despite our best efforts there was just no way to save his left arm, and it had to come off just below the elbow. 'Can I have my arm back, sir?' he asked. 'No, we had to cut it off, we cannot re-attach it,' I said. 'But can I have my arm?' he asked again. 'You see, we had to cut it off.' He interrupted, 'I know you had to cut it off, but I want it back. It must be in a bag or something, sir.' 'Why do you want it?' I asked. 'I am going to have it stuffed and use it as a club when I get back to my unit.' I must have looked shocked because he tried to comfort me, 'Don't you worry now, colonel. You did a fine job, and I hardly hurt at all; besides I write with my other hand anyway.'

Now, please tell me that these young guys aren't the Greatest Generation that has ever lived.





# Indiana Veterans Memorial Cemetery

A lot has been going on down at the Indiana Veterans Memorial Cemetery. Superintendent Alan Burnham has been very busy overseeing several projects including building a float to promote the cemetery in the Madison Regatta Parade.

The float was designed with the American Flag front and center and then the Indiana Flag to the left and POW/MIA Flag to the right. Directly behind in the center are the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force and Coast Guard Flag to represent all Military Branches. The float was designed to honor all American Veterans. The theme for the 2008 Madison Regatta Parade was "US Historical Events". Alan chose Veterans Day because the Indiana Veterans Memorial Cemetery is a place of honor for those who served. The Parade is held each year to begin the Madison Regatta, a hydroplane boat race. The Parade began at 6:30pm on Main Street in downtown Madison.

In addition to the parade, the cemetery announced the building of an archway that begins the peace walk into the new Scatter Garden, and a gazebo.





# VA to Open Domiciliary to Better Serve Homeless Veterans

Introduction of the Domiciliary Residential  
Rehabilitation and Treatment Program  
Domiciliary Care for Homeless Veterans  
Richard L. Roudebush VA Medical Center,  
Indianapolis, IN



The Domiciliary is a 50-bed residential rehabilitation and treatment program for homeless veterans with significant medical, mental illness, addiction, and psychosocial deficits. The program will be entirely VA-operated and located on the first, fourth, and fifth floors of leased space in the Blue Triangle Residence Hall, located at 725 N. Pennsylvania Street, Indianapolis, IN 46204. The Blue Triangle Residence Hall is currently being renovated to accommodate the VA Domiciliary. The program will have six private bedrooms and specialized services for women veterans. The anticipated opening of the Domiciliary is scheduled for September 2008.

The mission of the Domiciliary is to provide high quality residential rehabilitation and treatment services for homeless veterans with significant health care and social-vocational deficits. The goal is to provide opportunities for veterans to achieve and maintain their highest level of independent community integration through the provision of residential services designed for improved functional status, sustaining rehabilitation gains, disability management, recovery, and breaking the cycle of recidivism and homelessness. The Domiciliary provides time-limited residential treatment to veterans who lack a stable lifestyle or living arrangement that is conducive to recovery from medical, psychiatric, and/or substance use disorders.

Specialized services are provided in a safe, therapeutic community and are based on psychosocial rehabilitation and recovery-oriented principles. Core recovery concepts include building hope, fostering empowerment, increasing self-direction and responsibility, and finding meaningful life roles.

The Domiciliary provides a supportive residential component to augment intensive treatment provided through the VA Psychiatry and Mental Health Service of the Richard L. Roudebush VA Medical Center. The interdisciplinary treatment team provides biopsychosocial assessment, rehabilitation / treatment planning, intervention, and discharge planning. These services encompass recovery-oriented care and are accomplished through individual and group counseling, case management, structured work experiences, skill development, recreation therapy, and access to nutrition, optical and dental care, chaplaincy, and other specialty services as needed.

Please contact Dr. Laura Otis-Miles, Domiciliary Chief at (317) 988-3365 for additional information.



# Honor Indiana's veterans and active military personnel this fall at the Indiana State Museum



From November 8 – 11, the Indiana State Museum will honor Hoosiers in the military and is asking the public to provide the images. Indiana residents are invited to submit photos of friends and family who have served or are currently serving in any branch of the military.

Photos are being collected now through November 1 for a community picture board of Hoosier veterans, fallen soldiers and active military personnel. The community board will be on display at the museum November 8 – 11. Please include name, dates of service, division of military and hometown on the back of the photo. Please do not send original photos, as the Indiana State Museum will be unable to return them.



Mail photos to:  
Indiana State Museum  
Attn: Kerry Baugh  
650 W. Washington Street  
Indianapolis, IN 46204

**Indiana State Museum will provide free admission for veterans and active military personnel and group rate for their families on Sunday, November 9.**

Sunday, November 9  
***Veteran's Day Remembered***

11 a.m. – 5 p.m.

***Indianapolis Municipal Band's Veteran's Day Concert***  
3 – 4 p.m.;

Free for United States veterans and active military personnel. Patriotic music as performed by the Indianapolis Municipal Band is the highlight of a day honoring the men and women that have served our country. The day's events also include Civil War re-enactors from the 35<sup>th</sup> Indiana/1<sup>st</sup> Irish and remote-controlled boats by U.S. Navy veteran John Louk of the Indy Admirals. Members of the Quilter's

Guild of Indianapolis will show a few of the quilts that will be donated to the Quilts of Valor Foundation. 1,800 people donated their time to create the blocks used in creating the quilts, which will be given to wounded veterans recovering at Richard L. Roudebush VA Medical Center in Indianapolis. A community photo mural compiled of Hoosier veterans, fallen soldiers and active military personnel will also be on display from November 8 through 11.

Families of veterans receive the reduced museum admission of \$5.50 per adult, \$3.50 per child, and children 2 and younger are free.

## A schedule of the day's activities:

Irish in the Civil War,  
35th Indiana / 1st Irish re-enactors  
12 - 2 p.m.

Discover the contributions Irish immigrants made to the fight to preserve the Union during the Civil War.

Quilter's Guild of Indianapolis  
12 - 3 p.m.

The Indiana State Museum has partnered with the Quilter's Guild of Indianapolis to help wounded veterans recovering at Richard L. Roudebush VA Medical Center in Indianapolis. 1,800 people donated their time to create the blocks used in creating the quilts, pieced by members of the Quilter's Guild of Indianapolis. See a few of these quilts and learn about their program, the Quilts of Valor Foundation.

Combatants of the U.S. Navy,  
John Louk of the Indy Admirals  
1 - 3 p.m.

Learn about remote-controlled boats built by Indy Admirals Club member John Louk, who will showcase models that represent some of the more unique navel craft employed in conflict, including his first command.

Indianapolis Municipal Band Veteran's Day Concert  
3 - 4 p.m.

Enjoy patriotic music as performed by the Indianapolis Municipal Band. Returning to the museum for a fifth year, the band will enchant audiences of all ages with its unique sound in the Governor Frank O'Bannon Great Hall. Directed by Edgar L. Axsom, this 60-member band is composed of volunteer musicians from across central Indiana.

## **Bayh Proposes Agent Orange-Style Registry for Soldiers Exposed to Toxic Hazards**

*Indiana National Guard members guarding contaminated water plant in Iraq would receive medical evaluations, access to expedited VA benefits*

Washington Senator Evan Bayh (D-IN) today introduced legislation to create an Agent Orange-style registry for U.S. military personnel exposed to hazardous chemicals while serving in the line of duty. The Bayh proposal would guarantee access to follow-up medical evaluations and priority status at Veterans Administration (VA) medical facilities for service members who have been exposed to occupational and environmental hazards while deployed.

The Bayh legislation follows revelations this June that members of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 152<sup>nd</sup> Infantry of the Indiana National Guard were exposed to a highly carcinogenic toxin known as sodium dichromate while assigned to protect the Qarmat Ali Water Treatment Plant in Iraq in 2003.

This bill recognizes our responsibility to remove needless obstacles to care for American troops exposed to harmful toxins during wartime service, Senator Bayh said. “We should be guided by our government’s response to Agent Orange in Vietnam, when we shifted the evidentiary burden so veterans placed at risk did not bear the burden of proof if future health conditions developed.”

The Bayh legislation would establish a registry making at-risk veterans eligible for a series of medical examinations and laboratory tests. It would also authorize a scientific review of the evidence linking exposure to adverse health effects. Under the Bayh approach, a veteran’s own report of exposure would constitute sufficient proof necessary to receive medical care, barring evidence to the contrary.

Finally, the legislation would require front-line commanders to report hazardous material exposure to their non-deployed headquarters. Bayh said it was unacceptable that Maj. Gen. Martin Umbarger, adjutant general of the Indiana National Guard, learned of

the exposure after a Senate committee hearing this June, some four years after the 2003 Qarmat Ali incident.

Last Friday, Bayh wrote Defense Secretary Robert Gates and Army Secretary Pete Geren requesting that the Pentagon open an investigation to determine if members of the Indiana National Guard were properly evaluated for exposure.

In 2003, the Hoosier troops were guarding a water plant being rebuilt by the Houston-based construction firm KBR, then a subsidiary of the oil conglomerate Halliburton. Despite on-site assurances that the orange, sand-like dust spread throughout the facility was a mild irritant, it was later revealed to be sodium dichromate, a hexavalent chromium compound, which is the same substance that poisoned 634 people in Hinkley, Calif. , in an incident that served as the basis for the motion picture, Erin Brockovich.

In the letter, Bayh expressed concerns that the Army testing did not occur within the four-month window of time necessary to gauge possible health risks, and the Army may have used dated standards to measure possibly toxic chromium levels in the soldiers’ bodies.

The Qarmat Ali situation represents a threat our soldiers should have never had to face, Bayh wrote. In order to honor the men and women who volunteer to serve our nation in uniform, we must offer them the best protection possible when deployed in harms way and the best available care when they return.

The environmental health threats that the Indiana Guardsmen faced at Qarmat Ali are not unique. In July 2005, a senior Department of Defense official testified before the House Committee on Government Reform about numerous incidents involving potentially hazardous materials.

These included incidents at Al Tuwaitha Nuclear Research Center in Iraq, with possible excessive exposure levels of ionizing radiation; Al-Samawah in Iraq, with depleted uranium and exposure to toxic chemicals; Ash Shuaiba Port in Kuwait, with industrial pollution at a large port; Camp War Eagle in Iraq, with possible airborne lead exposures; Baghdad, with possible exposure to sarin; Kharsi Khanabad in Uzbekistan, with suspected environmental radiological and chemical agent contamination; and Al Mishraq Sulfur



Plant in Iraq, with airborne combustion products from a sulfur fire.

General Umbarger of the Indiana National Guard has established a program whereby all 139 soldiers who were directly exposed to the Sodium Dichromate during their tour have been or are being identified and notified and that an appointment with VA will be made so they can conduct an updated health assessment to include any follow-on tests which may be required. They will also be enrolled in the VA health care system and encouraged to participate in an on-line Post Deployment Health Reassessment (PDHRA).

The Guard established a Crisis Action Team in July 2008 and a phone bank to assist these soldiers. They set up the follow-up care with VA Medical Centers, conducted Town Hall meetings in South Bend, Jasper, Evansville, Terre Haute and Camp Atterbury on August 16-18. These are the areas from which the soldiers were deployed. They also established a hotline number for these soldiers to call to get more information. That number is 1-800-237-2850 x 3128.

Out of the 139 who received direct exposure, 129 have been screened and 10 have not been evaluated.

Overall, there were a total of 694 National Guard troops who were operating in the general area of the Sodium Dichromate. Of that number, 388 are no longer in the National Guard, 156 are still in the Guard but are not currently deployed, 140 are still in the Guard and are currently deployed. The Guard is making every attempt to contact all of these soldiers. The remaining 10 Guardsmen are deceased.



## VA Plans Expanded Outpatient Clinic in Crown Point

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
September 5, 2008

WASHINGTON – To expand the capacity of its outpatient clinic in Crown Point, Ind., the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced plans to replace the facility with a much larger clinic that the government will lease from a builder.

“VA is dedicated to providing the best in health care to the men and women who have served our nation in uniform,” said Dr. James B. Peake, Secretary of Veterans Affairs. “Community-based medicine makes preventive care easier for patients and permits easier follow-up with chronic health problems.”

The department has received bids from contractors to develop a 55,000-square-foot structure covering about nine acres. The winning contractor will own the new building and lease it to VA to operate. The site chosen at 93<sup>rd</sup> Avenue and Madison Street is directly behind the existing 40,000-square-foot clinic, which VA has also leased. VA expects to award a contract by early 2009.

Crown Point’s Adam Benjamin, Jr. VA Outpatient Clinic is part of the VA Chicago Health Care System and is located 55 miles southeast of Chicago. The clinic has 119 full-time staff members.

In fiscal year 2007, it received more than 100,000 outpatient visits from approximately 72,750 veterans living in northwest Indiana and surrounding areas. The visits were for both primary and specialty care. Many northwest Indiana veterans also receive specialty outpatient and inpatient care at the Jesse Brown VA Medical Center in Chicago.

# **The Indiana Operation Enduring Freedom/ Operation Iraqi Freedom Memorial Wall**

**Indiana has sustained the following  
casualties since the last Update**



**Indiana Army National Guard  
Specialist Joseph A. Ford, 23, New  
Albany, Indiana**

Died May 10, 2008 He was part of the Indiana National Guard's 76th Infantry Brigade Combat Team assigned to 1st Squadron, 152nd Cavalry Regiment, Army National Guard, New Albany, Indiana



**U.S. Army Staff Sergeant James P.  
Snyder, 48, Nappanee, Indiana, for-  
merly of Syracuse, Indiana.**

Passed away May 10, 2008 in Columbus, Georgia from injuries suffered in January while serving in Iraq.



**United States Marine Corps Lance  
Corporal Layton Bradley Crass, 22,  
Richmond, Indiana.**

Died on June 14, 2008, in Farah Province, Afghanistan, in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Lance Corporal Crass was assigned to 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines, 1st Marine Division, I Marine Expeditionary Force, Twentynine Palms, California.



**United State Marine Lance Corpo-  
ral, Andrew Francis Whitacre, 21,  
Bryant, Indiana.**

Died June 19, 2008 while conducting operations in Farah Province, Afghanistan. He was assigned to 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, I Marine Expeditionary Force, Twentynine Palms, California.



**U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Travis K.  
Hunsberger, 24, Goshen, Indiana.**

Killed in action on June 27, 2008, while conducting a combat reconnaissance patrol in Lamay, Afghanistan. He was assigned to Company C, 1st Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne).



**United States Army Sergeant Ryan  
P. Baumann, 24, whose father re-  
sides in Jeffersonville, Indiana.**

Baumann, of Great Mills, Md., died Aug. 1, 2008 on Route Alaska, Afghanistan. He was assigned to the 4th Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Fort Campbell, KY.



**Indiana Army National Guard Ser-  
geant Brian K. Miller, 37, Pendleton,  
Indiana.**

Killed August 2, 2008, in Abd Al-lah, Iraq, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Sergeant Miller was assigned to D Company, 1st Battalion, 293rd Infantry Regiment, 76th Infantry Brigade, Army National Guard, Huntington, Indiana.



**Indiana Army National Guard,  
Specialist, Jonathan Daniel Menke,  
22, Madison, Indiana.**

Died 4 August 2008 in Rustamiya, East Baghdad Iraq. He was assigned to 38th Military Police Company, 95th Battalion, 18th Brigade, Danville, IN.



**Indiana Army National Guard Ser-  
geant Gary Henry, 34, Indianapolis,  
Indiana**

Died August 4, 2008 in Baghdad, Iraq. Henry was a sergeant in the Guard's 38th Military Police Company, a Danville-based unit that trained at Fort Dix, N.J., before shipping out to Iraq in June. A 12-year veteran of the Indianapolis Fire Department, he had served as a special operations rescue coordinator before he was deployed.



**United States Army Staff Sergeant Kristopher D. Rodgers, 29, Sturgis Michigan, whose mother resides in Howe, Indiana.**

Died August 16, 2008 in Korengal, Afghanistan. He was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Fort Hood, Texas.

Hood, Texas.

## Famed Hoosier WASP Passes Away



On July 28th, Margaret Ringenberg passed away peacefully in her sleep while attending the Experimental Aircraft Air Show in Oshkosh Wisconsin. She was there to mentor young ladies who are with the SOAR program and to also participate in the Air Adventure. She was there doing what she loved best mentoring and flying.

Margaret fell in love with flying as a young girl when she took a ride with a barnstormer landed in a local cornfield. Initially she wanted to be a stewardess, taking flying lessons to help prepare her, she took her first solo in 1941, then in 1943 that all changed when she became a pilot in the Women's Air Force Service Pilot (WASP) during WWII. Of the more than 25,000 women to apply only 1,830 were accepted, of those only 1,074 graduated. While she did not fly combat missions, she did perform dangerous duties that included ferrying, test flying and towing targets. In 1944 the WASP disbanded, however that did not end Margaret's flying career. Margaret went on to have a successful career as a flight instructor, wife and mother. Margaret also participated in numerous air races winning several. Margaret has logged more than 40,000 hours. Tom Brokaw even devoted an entire chapter to Margaret in his book *"The Greatest Generation"*

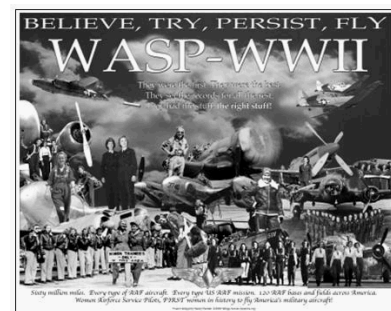
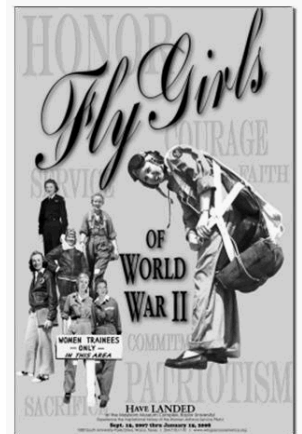
For more information about Margaret visit her official web site at [www.girlscanfly.net](http://www.girlscanfly.net)

### The WASP Song

words & music by LOES MONK 43-W-8

With the wind and the sand in our eyes  
And our goal placed up high in the skies  
We are the WASPS who serve the Air Corps  
so true,  
We're coming, just watch us ZOOM...down  
upon you!

On through the storm and the sun  
Fly on till our mission is done  
From factory to base, let the WASPS set the  
pace,  
We're a thousand strong!







## Director's Comments

### Indiana Veterans' Home Report

Superintendent Jerry Horn tendered his resignation on August 25<sup>th</sup> and I reluctantly accepted it. We have contracted with an interim superintendent, Rodney Dunn, and he is on site at the Home. Rodney resides in Parker City, Indiana and comes to this position with over 30 years as a Licensed Health Facilities Administrator. Originally from West Virginia, he has practiced throughout West Virginia and Indiana. During the last 13 years he has worked for Magnolia Health Systems and prior to that Beverly Enterprises. He has contracted for 90 days. We will be interviewing later for a permanent replacement.

The transition has gone as smoothly as could be expected and some changes have been made. The laundry has been turned over to PEN Products which can do the same fine job at a lesser cost. A smaller crew remains in the laundry for collection, sorting, redistribution, etc. The remainder will be extended the opportunity to move to other vacant positions within the Home.

Resident who smoke were recently very upset when a survey by the state Department of Health necessitated rewriting of the smoking policy and stronger enforcement. It limited the outside areas in which a person could smoke to only two locations. A study group has been formed and we anticipate a relaxation of some of those rules in the near future.

The four major veterans' organizations recently sent a joint letter to the local newspapers endorsing the change from the Department of Health to the Department of Veterans Affairs and the improvements we are trying to make. The letter stated, "Although this transition has brought up concerns in several areas, we stand behind the effort being made to ensure those improvements." The letter was signed by Ralph Tolan, American Legion Department Commander; Rick Faulk, VFW Department Commander; Carlos Arambula, State Commander of DAV; and, Mike Davis,

State AMVETS Commander. We want to acknowledge and express our appreciation for their support.

### IDVA Fall Conference

The Fall Conference is scheduled for Thursday, October 30th at Turkey Run State Park in Marshall County.

This beautiful, scenic location should be enjoyed by the attendees and their guests. So far 36 CVSOs and/or assistants and secretaries have said they will attend and 15 or more will be bringing their spouses.

The featured speaker will be Scott Levins from the National Archives. We invited Scott to speak back in 2005 and were unable to give him time to make his full presentation, so we've invited him back and, this time, given him as much time as he needs. Rounding out the program will be representatives from the VA Regional Office to report on any changes which have occurred since our conference in June and to answer your questions.

All of our new IDVA employees will be on hand for CVSOs to meet.

There will be a continental-style breakfast available on Thursday morning and lunch at the Turkey Run Restaurant, all meals will be on us.

### Return of the 76th Brigade

The National Guard is gearing-up for the return of over 3,400 troops from their deployment last year. The 76th Brigade will return towards the end of this year and the first of next year and Transition Workshops are scheduled to begin in April 2009.

The Workshops will be held at various locations across the state and will most likely be a 2-day affair, with 300-400 returnees being processed on a Saturday and the same amount on Sunday.

The Indiana Guard's Transition Assistance Advisor, Roger Peterman, has arranged for each returnee to receive a special notebook which has been prepared containing all of the brochures and handouts they will need to file their claims or to answer just about any question they may have.

CVSOs from the affected counties will be welcome to attend and assist in the filing of claims and the answering of questions. Schedule to follow.

Indiana Department of Veterans Affairs  
302 W. Washington Street E-120  
Indianapolis, IN 46204